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ABSTRACT

Into the "quality of public schools" issue steps politicians with quick fixes--"proven" business practices variously rejected by experts Peter Drucker (Management by Objectives) and W. E. Deming (Quality Management). This paper focuses on four of these business practices. The first "quick fix" is to determine product quality by inspection--hence, compare school quality by testing teachers and students. Deming opposed maintaining quality by inspection, instead focusing on design. The second fix is to assume that the quality of the product is not due to defective design, but due to incompetent personnel. Deming rejected making personnel the focus of problem solving. The third fix is to make or perpetuate schools as authority-oriented systems in which, paraphrasing Drucker (via Marc Tucker), teachers are treated as unskilled production line workers with little autonomy or pay. Finally, the fourth fix is to apply a narrow focus on goals, which are economic in this case. Public education has the long established purpose of educating citizens. Corporate America is concerned about the math, science, and English skills of prospective workers. An account of the recent history of educational reform in Georgia, led by business interests, is presented. (Contains 41 references.) (Author/MM)

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Should Business Reform Public Education? A 'Rainy Night' for Georgia Teachers and Implications for Science Education

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Into the "quality of public schools" issue step politicians with quick fixes - "proven" business practices variously rejected by experts Peter Drucker [Management by Objectives] and W.E. Deming [Quality Management]. They are: 1.) Determine product quality by inspection - hence, compare school quality by testing teachers and students. Deming opposed maintaining quality by inspection, instead focusing on design. 2.) Assume that the quality of the product is not due to defective design, but due to incompetent personnel. Deming rejected making personnel the focus of problem solving. 3.) Make or perpetuate schools as authority oriented systems in which, paraphrasing Drucker (via Marc Tucker), teachers are treated as unskilled production line workers with little autonomy or pay. 4.) Apply a narrow focus on goals. In this case, they are economic. Public education has the long established purpose of educating citizens. Corporate America is concerned about the Math, Science and English skills of prospective workers. An account of the recent history of educational reform in Georgia led by business interests will be presented.

Introduction

During the Georgia legislature meetings of 1999-2000, Georgia's teachers and their "unions," the Georgia Association of Educators and the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, were astounded when a Democratic governor and state legislature disavowed a trustworthy base of political support to back a package of educational reforms that did away with the so-called "tenure" of public school teachers. Just as surprising, was the fact that Republican legislators and the Republican State School Superintendent Linda Schrenko, leapt to the defense of teacher tenure.[1] Professional Association of Georgia Educators' president Barbara Christmas (Feb. 22, 2000) complained about the "angry speeches, negative TV campaign, and militant rhetoric . . . and disgraceful attacks on our integrity." Gov. Barnes was bold enough to appear

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before the G.A.E. and attack this teacher "union" that was dead set against any reforms. "It was clear and incisive," said local reporter Jim Wooten: "Change is coming; stand in the way and get crushed."(Feb. 20, 2000). I recorded Governor Barnes remarks that he is tired of his critics "standing around, sitting around, and whining about the need to change. Some say the schools are fine . . . some say that the sky will fall and pestilence will visit the land," and to a gathering of the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce - "We need to get away from excuse-based education."(Gilpin, 1999). Gov. Barnes, was described by the Atlanta Constitution in an address to the legislature as follows: " 'If you're against [my] reform,' he'd roar, you're against the children.' His heavy-handed tactics and political clout won him the war. Teachers were left feeling bruised and belittled by his attack on tenure." (Atlanta Journal and Constitution editorial, Mar. 28, 2000). What happened?

Into the confusion about public schools and their purpose and performance step politicians and their corporate sponsors with quick fixes; e.g., "proven" business practices like competition, focusing on inefficient personnel, and downsizing management. Political scientists Marilyn Gittell and Laura McKenna (1999) concluded that since the 1980s there has been a marked increase in the political power of Governors and states due to the devolution of federal power. They also observed, "The business community became more influential within the education regime after the publication of *The Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)."

Business, Chambers of Commerce and Education Reform

In 1998, the Metro Atlanta and Georgia Chambers of Commerce organized the "Breakthrough Alliance," with the goal to recruit over 200 C.E.O.s into an organization to improve Georgia schools and maintain Georgia's competitiveness in the world economy. (Saporta, Jan. 11, 2000) Led by BellSouth and it's C.E.O., Duane Ackerman, two dozen companies contributed between $75,000-$150,000 each to build up over $2 million for commercials and political contributions (ibid). The television ads featured pleas for improving education and "getting rid of bad teachers." An opening scene showed a perplexed young man doing paperwork with his employer looking over his shoulder (ibid). Undoubtedly, Mr. Ackerman is concerned by the fact that, "Roughly half the applicants for 18,000 BellSouth jobs in the past two years could not pass the company's basic math and reading tests" (Dickson, 2000). One slick P.R. image makes me chuckle - the Breakthrough Alliance web site showed C.E.O. Duane Ackerman teaching inner city kids how to play a violin in a $1000 suit. Are we trading "excuse-based education" for a flight from reality?

http://www.gpc.peachnet.edu/~jaliff/bt1.htm

http://www.gpc.peachnet.edu/~jaliff/ackerman-kids1.GIF

http://www.gpc.peachnet.edu/~jaliff/ackerman-kids2.GIF

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Politically speaking, the business community has reached a consensus on educational reform and now have enough political power enlisted to force their agenda on the educational community. One reporter noted, "Calling it the time to 'seize the moment,' over 60 of the nation's leading business executives announced today the formation of a new Business Coalition for Excellence in Education to support Federal efforts to raise student achievement in America's public schools. The group released a set of principles it will rally behind in current legislative efforts to enact K-12 education reform" (Wilson, 2001). At a 1999 meeting of the Busines Roundtable, Gov. Angus King of Maine remarked,"You did the right thing by focusing on the states - that's where the action is. You can make a real difference at the state level." (Walsh, 1999)

"Business Coalition for Excellence in Education" Principles of Reform

- Rigorous and measurable standards for student achievement.
- Annual high-quality assessments aligned to state standards.
- Academic assistance for students who do not meet the standards.
- Accountability measures for states, districts and principals.
- Flexibility for states and localities in designing a strategy to meet state standards.
- Alignment of curriculum, assessments, teacher preparation and training and accountability systems.
- Math and science excellence.
- Improved teacher quality, preparation and retention.
- Integration of technology into the classroom. (Wilson, 2001).

"Business leaders understand accountability and have little patience with chronic failure, fiscal mismanagement, and a slow pace of change. They are also the entities that will later hire the students who are currently moving through the school system. [Rees, Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/mandate/priorities/chap3.html, 2001.

Business is highly organized in this reform effort, "Business leaders, in

cooperation with educators, community leaders, workforce development specialists and other stakeholders, have formed state and local coalitions to impact a wide range of workforce and education initiatives. National Alliance of Business' (NAB) Business Coalition Network advances this business leadership at the national, state, and local levels by working with over 1300 business-led coalitions to improve student achievement and workforce quality.

This collaboration includes management or partnership with:

National Organizations for Business-led Education Reform

- **Business Coalition for Excellence in Education (BCEE)**
- **The Business Coalition for Education Reform (BCER)**
- **Business Coalition for Workforce Development (BCWD)**
- **National Employer Leadership Council (NELC)**
- **Education Excellence Partnership"**
  http://www.nab.com/bcn.htm

To accomplish the conversion of the Democratic party Governor and supporting legislators who were, to no minor extent, elected with teacher support, the Associated Press reported that the Chambers of Commerce filled Gov. Barnes' campaign chest with well over $100,000 dollars in 1999-2000 and over $2,000,000 to other politicians and advertisement. The Breakthrough Alliance used Barnes' media consultant in Washington to construct their campaign. (Associated Press, Jan. 22, 2000). Gov. Barnes announced his plans to remove teacher "tenure" after the Chambers had announced their plan.

http://www.gpc.peachnet.edu/~jaliff/gov2.htm

The Atlanta Metro and Georgia Chambers of Commerce and the Breakthrough Alliance published on their web sites a standard letter of support for Chamber members to sign and send to their legislators and a speech to give to civic clubs, complete with projector slides (Breakthrough Alliance, 1999-2000). The Associated Press reported that the Governor gave this speech practically word for word to the Georgia Legislature, Jan 13, 2000 (Associated Press, Jan. 22, 2000). The President of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce made a flying tour of Georgia to promote the Governor's reforms, claiming that if the reforms were not enacted, "We're going to reap a bitter harvest in years to come" (Saporta, Dec. 11, 2000). Business and foundation-supported public policy centers, partnership groups and statewide Chambers of Commerce are at the center of their [education] reform movements," a BellSouth press release stated. "Their work has contributed to dozens of pieces of school improvement legislation . . . the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (see below) played a key role in the Governor's Education Reform Study Commission, with 24 [of 50 members] of its members serving. The commission provided research and recommendations that helped frame the nation's latest omnibus reform act -- Georgia is the first state to abolish teacher tenure," a BellSouth press release

boasted. (BellSouth, Apr. 28, 2000). [The bill passed March 21, 2000.]

http://bellsouthcorp.com/proactive/newsroom/release.vtml?id=32602

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education is one of several organizations nationwide that has a diverse group of members. Nevertheless, it is dominated by the business community with roughly 45% of business executives as compared to 25% of the membership in public teaching or related support positions. Other members came mostly from the legislature and state government (Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, 1996). It was formed by "a group of business leaders from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce who identified education as a pressing concern for economic development in Georgia. With the help of the Georgia Industrial Development Association and the Georgia Alliance for Public Education, a statewide partnership was formed." Their chairman was Carl Swearingen, President of BellSouth Telecommunications. Partnership goals include: "establish world class performance, "emphasize vocational skills, "use telecommunications and computing technology as tools, and "improve math and science achievement."

Propaganda: "Unions" and "Tenure"

Edward and Mary Ducharme complained in the Journal of Teacher Education, "We are startled at the vitriol that politicians hurl at both practicing and prospective teachers. One would think that they are describing drug dealers and rapists rather than people choosing to dedicate their lives to working with young people. Some pols portray teacher unions as armies of insurgents determined to undercut public education and block all reform for selfish interests" (E. and F. Ducharme, 1998).

As the Governor and the Chambers speak, it is obvious that they blame no one other than an educational "monopoly" that surprisingly enough, in the area of teacher certification and administration of education, was set up by the Georgia state legislature. The legislature has even gone so far as to mandate specific courses such as one to recognize students with learning disabilities (Georgia State Law, 1975). Attacking teachers shifts blame away from politicians.

More propaganda - Georgia's teachers had "tenure." The factory worker muses, "Why should teachers have tenure while I don't?" The fact is that Georgia teachers did not have tenure in the same sense as some college professors. They had a process of fair dismissal. Amazingly, as BellSouth's educational foundation site features a report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future that recommends, "Remove incompetent teachers through peer assistance and review programs that provide necessary supports and due process" (BellSouth Foundation, 2000), political expedience demanded more. Fair dismissal meant that a teacher could not be summarily fired after giving the star football player an F in English or being accused of having sex with an extraterrestrial. Finally accepting advice from P.A.G.E., Gov. Barnes "compromised" so the newly hired teachers will be given a letter of dismissal that is subject to legal question and defense (Jones, 2000).[2] This is another of those situations, 'We already had the laws on the books, so why didn't we use

them.' Dr. Christmas of P.A.G.E. complained, "If there is a way to instill a conscience and backbone into every school board and every administrator in Georgia, we'd be all for it" (Christmas, Feb. 7, 2000).

Economics, Management, Business Goals and Education Reform

"Business is coming to bear the major responsibility for the kind of education that is necessary for any country to remain competitive in the new economy" -- Davis and Botkin in The Monster Under the Bed (7, pg. 15).

The Emerging Economic Paradigm of Education (Davis and Botkin, 1994)

1. Enhancing national productivity will be the primary goal of education.

2. The employees of business and its customers will become the focus of national education policy. [Re: #1 and #2: Should there be a national reexamination of the purpose of schools?]

3. The products of schools are the learning skills acquired (value added in T.Q.M.) by the potential workforce: learning power = earning power. The mastery of learning skills will replace factual learning as the primary activity of schools. [I agree with the thrust of #3.] (p. 16, 1994. Quotes used with permission of the publisher.)

The Five Guiding Principles of the Quality Management of Education, after Holt, 1993 and Deming, 1993.

- **Establish a moral purpose for education.** [Should we be educating citizens or workers?] Drucker (1989. p. 19) asserted, "Students must learn where our notions of right and wrong, good and evil, liberty and slavery, come from."
- **Use cooperative rather than individual efforts.** [Should the business community unilaterally reform education?]
- **Stop the use of inspection (testing) to improve the product.** Deming (1993) thought that inspection of products ignored the processes that were needed to constantly improve the products. Inspection is commonly equated with Management by Objectives (M.B.O., Drucker). "Dictation by objectives" is a misuse of M.B.O (Aliff, 1993). But, P. F. Drucker (1974) surmised, efficiency is the minimum condition for the continued success of an organization, "Efficiency is doing things right." [3]
- **Continuously improve the system's processes and its products.** [Develop, like the University of Michigan, a tradition of excellence and community commitment.]
- **Train employees on the job in the areas of teaching skills and subject knowledge.** [The Georgia Academy of Science could do both for science educators.]

Management Practices Reflected in the Business-led Education Reform Movement in Georgia to Date

To accomplish the Governor's and Chambers' reforms, come the litany of standard business solutions that make "Dilbert" cartoon subjects, abhorred by the advocates of good management practice like Peter Drucker 's Management by Objectives and W.E. Deming's Quality Management followers. They are:

1.) Determine product quality by inspection - hence, compare school quality by testing teachers and students. Although one might defend this as an M.B.O. approach, Drucker would not claim it (Drucker, 1989), professionals are not treated that way. Deming's Quality Management opposed maintaining quality by inspection, instead focusing on design (Deming, 1993). The only roles for testing are as an indicator of process effectiveness and in improving design, not to punish poorly performing inner-city and rural schools and teachers

2.) Assume that the quality of the product is not due to defective design, but due to incompetent personnel. Deming rejected making personnel the focus of problem solving. This is popularly called "Theory x" management (Aliff, 1993, secondary to Maslow and McGregor). Theory X assumes that employers or organizations must be coerced to perform well. It rejects the idea that professionals are self-motivated to improve ("Theory y"). Deming and Drucker ardently supported Theory y management.

3.) Make schools authority oriented systems in which, paraphrasing Drucker, teachers are treated as unskilled production line workers with little autonomy or pay (Drucker, 1969; Tucker, 1988, p. 44). Drucker admonished, "Faculty [teachers] require a performance-oriented organization, rather than an authority-oriented organization" (Drucker, 1969).

4.) Apply a narrow focus on goals. In this case, they are economic. Arthur E. Wise, writing on Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of American Schools, observed, "In the drive to make educational institutions accountable, goals have been become narrow, selective and minimal. Productivity questions are intrinsically more difficult than equity questions because they arise not from a political impasse but from a lack of knowledge about how to teach. Statistical demonstrations [test score analyses] do not reveal how to increase [educational] productivity. Nonetheless, policymakers [legislators] appear disposed to give it a try" (Wise, p. 59, 1979). Wise also concluded that increasing bureaucratization of the schools is always the result of legislative intervention, as has been charged with Gov. Barnes' law. An education reform oversight commission was made an agency of the Georgia state government.

Simplistic ideas that make capital of stereotypes make powerful political messages. "Private schools are better than public schools." In my opinion, recent plans to begin the privatization of public schools began philosophically with Reaganism.[4] Free enterprise can save everything, competition and a free market are the cures. No government is the best government, etc. It is a political philosophy that asserts that teachers are not producers of economic

wealth. Hence, by definition, the tremendous cost of education is largely unproductive, unless, of course, it is dedicated to training workers. Weisman, writing in the Phi Delta Kappan, (1993) observed, "It seems that American business has found in education a convenient scapegoat for its productivity problems and its unwillingness to pay for costly changes in production processes and on-site training, the two [T.Q.M.] keys to the success of Japanese and German corporations . . . But all this posturing is far from benign. It has led to the widely accepted notion that the entire educational system is broken." [5, 6]

How Will Science Education Change Under the Control of Business

In the near future, I see opportunities for scientists and science educators to improve science teacher education and the learning of science in the classroom. Whether that can happen under the present policy-making regime, is hard to predict. Unless professionals exert more influence over the political process, the reforms will fail and the public school system will collapse. Will corporations dictate both the goals and standards of education?

Changes if Business Reforms Science Education for Economic Reasons (and without professional support of science educators)

1. The enforcement of narrow goals for math and science achievement.

2. Emphasis on math and physical sciences and less resources for Art, Music, Biology and Environmental Studies.

3. Lessening instruction in the traditions of science and democracy. (See also Wise, 1979; Weisman, 1993.)

4. Increasing bureaucratization of the schools, increasing costs, increasing political control of the purpose of schools. (See also Wise, 1979; Weisman, 1993)

Reporter Jonathan Weisman (1993), warned, "If the nation buys into this call for upgrading academic skills, schools could become little more than job training centers. The U.S. system of public education was set up to ensure the health and safety of American democracy. The skills necessary to that purpose - debate, criticism, historical understanding, and political savvy - are conspicuously absent from the desiderata of corporate America." There is no consensus in this country that the primary purpose of public schools K-12 is to train workers, but that is Gov. Roy Barnes vision. "Business is the primary consumer of public school graduates," he declared (Authors notes, 2000).

The Georgia reforms promise to reduce class size (so far they have not) but at the same time they forced local school boards to reduce paraprofessional help in the classrooms to pay for the reforms (AJC Editorial, July 2, 2000). Focusing on the need to increase class time in academic subjects like math and science, Chamber objectives aimed at producing better workers, local school boards were also faced with the fait accompli to eliminate art and gym classes [and even

my daughter's 5th grade recess] (Salzer, June 22, 2000). The latter is appalling in light of the increasing inactivity and obesity of children.

The Governor streamlined the process of teacher certification to make it easier for teachers qualified in subject areas rather than general education (AJC, p. B 6 July 2, 2000), making the process of teacher employment more like private schools [Some teachers refer to this as the "30 day Wonder Program."]. The national columnist Thomas Sowell (2000) said that private schools get better teachers with smaller salaries. However, how large is that pool of intellectually superior talent? In my opinion, this will benefit secondary schools, but not middle and primary schools where we need teachers with more training in educational psychology. Moreover, I question the wisdom of demoralizing and running off the teachers we have now in light of present and projected shortages.

Conclusion

Politicians and economic interests are not willing to come to grips with the changes in our society that they have helped craft. They want large numbers of low wage immigrants to empower the service economy; meanwhile they campaign on a platform to "not raise taxes." How, then, will we educate the children of these immigrant children suddenly overloading the public schools? In Seattle, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction observed in 1994, "The school population is growing 65% faster than the general population" (Rhodes, 1994).

In my opinion, the current climate of dissatisfaction with public schools is also related to the collapse of the American family. Historically, this has been caused in large part by industrialization and the move away from a farm economy - first, the removal of the father from the family, later women moving into occupations and out of the home, add to this drugs, poverty and a large influx of immigrants to the modern mix. Teachers are increasingly becoming "en loco parentis." The growing phenomenon of home schooling is not only evidence of dissatisfaction with public schools, but proof that some families regard cohesion at a higher value than increased income and career.

We can appreciate the Chambers' and the Gov. Barnes' concern about Georgia's competitive position in the world economy and the increasing costs of education. They have a right to present their views, admittedly valid from a narrow perspective. However, the public schools that have helped level the playing fields of success and wealth in America are in danger from "key-hole thinking." Teachers hope that we can help politicians and business folk open the door and see the whole classroom.

If the schools are unsafe, make them safe! If poverty causes illiteracy and illiteracy causes poverty, work to eliminate them. If teachers are poorly prepared, train them well and pay them what they are worth. Here, the BellSouth foundation may be helpful. If parents are abandoning children, make existing families stronger and strengthen community support for broken

families. If the local community and parents don't support the schools, tell them how important their contribution would be and get their help. We need community responses to community problems. In that sense, business can help. Above all, we need compromise and popular consensus to reform schools, not the political dictatorship of a well-funded minority.[7]

Attacking the professionality of teachers is the focus of business interests and their political allies because teachers stand in the way of their narrow reforms. Teachers want to reform education too. If the politicians and business interests will relent from teacher bashing, we may be able to take the first step towards making commitments to make schools better. I dare say, 'a cloud of witnesses' is watching from above or in our minds. They are the spirits of all those "Mr." and "Miss" teachers who gave their whole selves to you and me, and to the profession of teaching.

Footnotes

1. In a reverse of the current national political climate, a Democratic Party Governor, Mr. Barnes, and political supporters were hit hard by criticism from the Republican Party. State School Superintendent, Linda Schrenko and the state Senate Republican leader, Eric Johnson, were vociferous in support of teachers as professionals. Even as they supported the testing of teachers and students, and the grading of schools, Mr. Johnson stated, "Gov. Barnes and the Atlanta Democrats blamed teachers for Georgia's low scores and ignored their input. To attract and keep the best teachers, we must pay them more. Georgia's majority party cut their pay raise in half and increased the cost of their health insurance. They increased their paper work and eliminated funding for teacher aides. They stripped local school boards and the elected State School Superintendent of power and placed it in the hands of a huge, new bureaucracy in Atlanta run by their appointed cronies." (Johnson, 2000).

Teachers showed their anger by successfully running or backing several candidates against the incumbent supporters of the Governor's reform bill in the July, 2000 primary. One, Democratic State Senator Paul Broun of Athens, GA, the location of the University of Georgia, had been in the legislature for 38 years (Galloway, 2000).

2. A news report noted, "In a statement Wednesday [Feb 23, 2000], GAE said, 'The PAGE compromise was basically the sell-out of Georgia's teachers . . . "PAGE's executive Vice-President, Barbara Christmas, said GAE's 'hysterical opposition to this legislation proves that they are much more interested in strengthening their union than in improving schools." (Anon., A.P., 2000, Feb 24).

page1.gif

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3. A news report noted, "Now that most states are giving their students

standardized achievement tests, the schools need to make sense of the results, and ensure that the tests measure true academic progress, according to a group of governors, corporate leaders and education officials from around the nation. 'The key thing is to have data systems that would reveal how much progress is being made,' said Michigan Gov. John Engler at the fourth National Education Summit in Rockland County. [N.Y.]. But teachers themselves seem to be losing confidence in the way the nation's latest education reform effort is being carried out. A poll by the American Federation of Teachers found that just 55 percent of its members support "standards-based reform" -- a decrease from 73 percent in 1999. Sandra Feldman, president of the AFT, said the eroding support has a lot to do with teachers' sense that they are not getting the resources they need to play their part in school reform. In addition, Feldman said, they believe that students are being tested too frequently and that the test results are being used not to inform educators, but to punish them. 'If the teachers become disillusioned, we'll never be able to carry out this agenda,' she said." See reference 25.

4. Caspar Weinberger in an article entitled, "Education: The Lobby [teacher unions] Versus the Children," quoted then Gov. Reagan as he was considering a bill to increase teacher salaries, "But if the schools are bad, how is paying bad teachers more going to help?" (Weinberger, 2000).

5. For a well-documented account of the efforts to cast public education in a negative light, see Berliner, D.C. & Biddle, B.C. *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America's Public Schools*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Longman, 1995. Of particular note is the analysis of the misuse of SAT scores to document educational failures in certain states. We could include Georgia in the misuse, as Georgia SAT scores are regularly compared by the Governor and others with certain other states, e.g., Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee, ignoring the fact that a much larger and less selective percentage of Georgia students take the SAT test. See reference 23.

6. "According to Mr. Ackerman, 'Information technology and today's global economy give every county and town in Georgia the potential to grow and prosper. The business sector in our state is excited about the potential for success that can be reached if our students break through to higher levels of learning and academic performance." [This seems to indicate that the schools should indeed help BellSouth with employee training.] See reference 8.

7. For a more moderate business effort to reform education, look at the Business Roundtable website. It puts more emphasis on professional development and parental involvement.
http://www.brtable.org/document.cfm/467.

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